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ON ROANOKE ISLAND

By WALTER CLARK.

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Author
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ON ROANOKE ISLAND.

ADDRESS OF JUDGE WALTER CLARK AT MEETING INAUGURATED
BY THE STATE LITERARY AND HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION,
MANTEO, N. C., 24, JULY 1902.

Ladies and Gentlemen: Standing on the Aventine hill, by the banks of the Tiber, we can still behold the cradle of the great Roman people, the beginning of that imperial race which for centuries held in its control the entire civilized world of their day and whose laws, whose feats of arms, whose thought, have profoundly impressed all succeeding ages.

HERE BEGAN THE GREATEST MOVEMENT OF THE AGES.

Standing here we see the spot where first began on this continent the great race which in the New World in three hundred years has far surpassed in extent of dominion, in population and power the greatest race known to the Old. Farther than the imperial eagles ever flew, over more men than its dominion ever swayed, with wealth which dwarfs its boasted treasures, and intelligence and capacity unknown to its rulers, this new race in three centuries has covered a continent, crossed great rivers, built great cities, tunneled mountains, traversed great plains, sealed mountain ranges and halting but for a moment on the shores of a vaster ocean, has already annexed a thousand islands and faces the shores of a Western continent so distant that we call it the East.

We do well to come here to visit the spot where this great movement began. It was one of the great epochs of all history. Here, 36 years before the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock, here 23 years before John Smith and Jamestown, in the year 1584, the first English keel grated on the shores of what is now the United States. Here the greatest movement of the ages began, which has completed the circuit of the globe. For thousands of years, God in His wisdom, had hidden this land behind the billows till His appointed time, and in Europe and Asia millions had fought and perish-

ed for the possession of narrow lands. The human intellect had been dwarfed with the dimensions of its prison house. In due season Copernicus gauged the heavens, revealing countless worlds beyond our grasp and Columbus almost at the same time unveiled this tangible world beyond the Atlantic. Stunned, dazed, the mind of man slowly realized the broadened vision unrolled before it. Since then the energies of the human intellect have steadily expanded, and thought has widened with the process of every sun.

Here broke the spray of the first wave of Saxon population and now westward across the continent to the utmost verge and beyond it, there rolls a human sea. Three centuries have done this.

About this very date Amadas and Barlow landed here, for on July 4, a day doubly memorable on these shores, they desirous land and sailing up the coast 120 miles they entered with their two small vessels through an inlet, probably now closed. Proceeding further they came abreast of this island, where they landed and were hospitably received.

WHAT WONDROUS CHANGES.

Nature remains unaltered. As on that July day, of the long ago, earth, air and sky and sea remain the same. The same blue arch bends above us. The same restless ocean rolls. The same sun shines brightly down. The same balmy breezes breathe soft and low. The same headlands jut out to meet the waves. The same bays lie open to shelter the coming vessels. The trees, the foliage, the landmarks, would all be recognized by the sea-worn wanderers of that memorable day. But as to what is due to man, how altered!

To the westward, where the Indian paddled his light canoe on great rivers, innumerable vessels, moved by the energies of steam, plow the waters, freighted with the produce of every industry and the produce of every clime. Where the smoke of the lonely wigwam rose, now the roar of great cities fills the ear and the blaze of electric lights reddens the sky. Where then amid vast solitudes the war-whoop resounded, boding death and torture, now rise a thousand steeples and anthems to the Prince of Peace float upon the air. Where the plumed and painted warrior stealthily trod the narrow

war path, mighty engines rush. Where a few thousand naked savages miserably starved and fought and perished, near one hundred millions of the foremost people of all the world live and prosper. Three short centuries have seen this done.

OUR CONTRIBUTION TO EUROPE.

Looking eastward the ocean rolls unchanged, but not as then to be crossed only after two or three months of voyage. Already a week suffices for its passage and across its waves even now messages flash without the medium of wires. Beyond its shores is also a new world. When the first expedition landed here, the Turk was threatening Vienna, and the Spaniard was asserting his right to burn and pillage in Holland. The fires of the Inquisition burned in Spain and Belgium. France, sunk to a second-class power, grovelled beneath the rule of one of the most worthless of its many worthless kings, the third Henry—while England, the England of Drake and Raleigh, of Shakespeare and Bacon, and of Elizabeth, already lay beneath the growing shadow of the Armada, whose success threatened the extinction of English liberty and of the Protestant religion. Russia was then a small collection of barbarous tribes and Germany and Italy, not yet nations, were mere geographical expressions. Contrast that with the Europe of to-day. The change is barely less startling there than on this side of the water.

The change has been greatly the reflex action from this side. Civilization has been and is on the steady increase in the betterment of the masses. The leaders of thought, Shakespeare, Bacon, Michael Angelo, Dante, Petrarch, the painters, the sculptors, the statesmen, were as great then as since. The difference is in the masses. Then they were degraded, disregarded, beaten with many stripes, dying like animals after living like brutes; to-day they have a voice in every government and are beginning more fully to perceive that they have unlimited power which they can use for their own advancement and the betterment of their material surroundings.

The change started here when a new race began, without feudal burdens and amid the breadth and freedom of untrammeled nature. With new paths to tread, new roads to

make, new rivers to travel, new cities to build, men began to think new thoughts and to add to the freedom of nature the liberty of speech and of action.

WHERE THE SHACKLES OF THE AGES WERE BROKEN.

Well do we come here to visit the spot where the shackles of the ages were broken, precedents forgotten and where man first began to stand upright in the likeness in which God had made him.

Naught tells more forcibly the depression in which the minds of the men of that day were held than the fact that the hardy English mariners, the descendants of the Vikings of old, delayed nearly a century after Columbus had discovered the New World before the foot of an Anglo-Saxon had trod the shores of North America. From the discovery in 1492 to the first landing here in 1584 and the first permanent but feeble settlement at Jamestown in 1607 was a long time. Could another new continent such as this be discovered in 3,000 miles of London to-day, not as many hours would elapse as our ancestors of three centuries ago permitted years to pass, before the English race would land on its shores. In 1520 Cortez led the Spaniards to the Plateau of Mexico and subverted an empire. Yet 65 years more passed before Amadas and Barlow led the first English expedition to land on this continent.

Not only were men's minds enthralled by governments which existed solely for the benefit of the few, but the condition of the upper classes was only in degree better than that of the poorer. Coffee, sugar, tobacco, potatoes and other articles of common use by the poorest to-day were unknown. Queen Elizabeth herself lived on beer and beef, and forks being unknown that haughty lady ate with her fingers, as did Shakespeare, Raleigh and Bacon. Articles of the commonest use and necessity in the dwellings of the poorest now, were then not to be obtained in the palaces of Kings. Carpets were absent in the proudest palaces and on the fresh strewn rushes beneath their tables princes and kings threw the bones and broken meats from their feasts. Religion was to most a gross superstition, law was a jargon and barbarous, and medicine the vilest quackery. Just in proportion as the masses

have been educated, as freedom has been won by them, as their rights have been considered, the world has advanced in civilization and in material well being.

Unlike the founding of Rome, where the seat of Empire abode by its cradle, no great cities arose here at Roanoke Island, at Jamestown nor at Plymouth. The new movement begun here was not for empire but for the people and it has advanced and spread in all directions.

THE GREAT DANGER TO-DAY.

In 1820 Daniel Webster delivered a memorable oration at the anniversary of the landing at Plymouth Rock. In that speech he prophesied that our free government could stand only so long as there was a tolerable equality in the division of property. What would he say could he stand here to-day and count over the names of those possessed of \$20,000,000, of \$50,000,000, of \$100,000,000, even of more than \$200,000,000, and name over the great trusts and corporations who levy taxes and contributions at their own will, greater than those exacted for all the purposes of government? He instances that when the great monasteries and other church corporations under the Tudors threatened English prosperity the eighth Henry confiscated their property (as has been done in our day by Mexico and other Latin countries) and re-distributed their accumulations. He might have added that when the new commercial monopolies under his daughter Elizabeth bade fair to take the place of the suppressed ecclesiastical foundations in re-creating inequality, the Commons called on her to pause and that haughty, unbending sovereign had the common sense to save her throne by yielding.

Mr. Webster also utilized the occasion to point to the fact that in France by her exemption of nobles and priests from taxation, property had gravitated into their hands till the wild orgy of revolution had re-transferred it to the people and he prophesied that the new law in that country which by restricting the right to will property had prevented its accumulation into a few hands would inevitably destroy the restored monarchy and rebuild the republic. His prophecy has come true.

The great expounder of the constitution was right. Power goes with those who own the property of the country. When property is widely distributed and a fair share of the comforts of life are equally in the reach of all, a country will remain a republic. When property, by whatever agency, becomes concentrated in a few hands, a change is impending. Either the few holders will bring in, as he stated, an army that will change the government to a monarchy, or revolution will force a redistribution as in England and France. That has been the lesson of history.

In this day, of wider intelligence and general education, let us hope and believe that there is a third way, hitherto unknown in practice, and that by the operation of just and wiser laws enacted by the sovereignty of the people, a more just and equal distribution of wealth will follow and the enjoyment of material well being will be more generally diffused among the masses. All power is derived from and belongs to the people and should be used solely for their good. This is the fundamental teaching of the institutions which begin their record from the landing of the Anglo-Saxon race on these shores, a landing which was first made at this spot.

Had I the ability of Mr. Webster, could I speak with his authority, I might point out as he did the great danger of the accumulation of wealth in a few hands, and might foresee and foretell the remedies which a great, a wise and an all-powerful people will apply. But I shall not follow in the path which he has trod, *haud passibus equis*.

Let us not forget on this occasion that to this island belongs the distinguished honor of being the birth-place of the first American girl. It is the Eden from which she sprung. She had no predecessor and remains without a model and without a rival. In that first Eden man was the first arrival and the garden was a failure. Here the girl was the first arrival and the boys have followed her ever since. Appropriately she bore the name of Dare, and daring, delightful, her successors have been ever since. We do well, were we to come here solely to do honor to the memory of the first American girl, this finished, superlative product of her sex and of these later ages.

NORTH CAROLINA'S FUTURE.

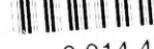
When the first expedition landed here there were, it is estimated, in the bounds of the present State of North Carolina, 20,000 Indians, earning a precarious living by fishing and hunting and spending their miserable lives in slaying and torturing one another. To-day we have near 2,000,000 of the foremost race of all the world, living in peace and order. Could I like Mr. Webster, in his Plymouth Rock oration, prophecy as to the future—100 years hence—I should predict a still greater change. I should say that with the same rate of increase North Carolina will then have 6,000,000 of people and that cities of 100,000 inhabitants will be numbered by the score; that every village will be connected with its neighbor by electric roads, for steam will have ceased to be a motive power; that education will be universal and poverty unknown; that every swamp will have been drained to become the seat of happy homes; that every river will be deepened and straightened; that public works operated for the benefit of the people and not for the enrichment of a few, will bring comforts and conveniences, now unknown, to the most distant fireside; that the hours of labor will be shortened; that the toil of agriculture will be done by machinery and that irrigation will have banished droughts; that the advance of medicine, already the most progressive science among us, will have practically abolished all diseases save that of old age; that simpler laws and an elevated and all-powerful public opinion will have minimized crime and reduced the volume of litigation; that religion less sectarian and disputations about creeds and forms will be a practical exemplification of that love of fellow-man which was typified by its divine founder; that every toiler with brain or with hand will prosper and that under juster laws the only inequality in wealth or condition will be that due to the difference in the energy, efforts and natural gifts of each possessor.

This is but the first of many successive celebrations of the landing here and if these feeble, fugitive words shall be preserved to that distant day the speaker who shall read them to a vast audience gathered here will either justify the prophecy or at least he will say, "In the interest of the happiness of the human race, they ought to have come true."

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